

# Washington 2003 Crop Weather Season Review

**January:** Unseasonably warm weather had many ag producers predicting an early spring. Warm temperatures and copious rainfall resulted in early emergence of foliage on peach plums and other native plants in Grays Harbor County. Daffodils and other spring bulbs were up and showing buds. Christmas tree growers began planting. Soils in western Washington remained super saturated as a result of heavy rainfall with some minor flooding. Winter wheat and pastures were growing and improving in condition. Asotin County noted that there was no snowpack in the mountains, which created concerns about water supplies for the upcoming summer.

**February:** Warmer temperatures and rainfall earlier in the month helped winter wheat emergence in eastern Washington. Western Washington experienced super saturated fields from heavy precipitation, which caused some fields to flood. Cooler weather blanketed Washington at the end of the month with temperatures dipping into the teens. Some fruit producers in Yakima County reported crop damage due to freezing temperatures. Early potato planting began in the Columbia Basin. Farmers also prepared fields for planting. Christmas tree growers planted new fields and prepared equipment for herbicide application.

**March:** Mild temperatures and above normal rainfall improved the overall crop outlook. Snowpack continued to be below average. Winter wheat in Whitman County was enhanced by the soil moisture and was in good condition. Pastures in eastern Washington improved due to the moisture, but many remained in poor condition from past drought conditions. In western Washington, persistent rainfall resulted in two minor flood events and had most ag producers several weeks behind in field cultivation. Christmas tree growers finished tree planting and prepared equipment for herbicide applications.

**April:** April showers in western Washington continued to delay tillage for most of the month. Oyster harvest continued. Spring wheat and barley seeding in the Palouse progressed well ahead of last year. Warm temperatures near the end of April helped promote growth in winter wheat. In the central and eastern region, cattle were prepared to move onto spring range. Frost control measures were implemented in the Yakima Valley, and damage was minimal. Tree fruit in the Yakima Valley continued to develop about 5-10 days ahead of normal and bud breaks in Concord grapes were a week early in Benton County. Asparagus harvest continued, while potatoes, onions, carrots, sweet corn, and vegetable seed crops were planted.

**May:** Cool weather during mid-May brought rain and hail to western Washington and snow to eastern Washington. The unusually low temperatures caused apple and pear damage in the central region. Field crops and vegetables remained about 2-3 weeks behind normal. Commercial strawberry growers reported late bloom on the Hood variety due to cold temperatures. Commercial blueberry growers reported extensive damage to plantations due to deer grazing. In late May growers took advantage of warmer temperatures to apply fungicides and insecticides. Dairyman applied liquid manure to forage fields.

**June:** Above average temperatures in early June encouraged head development in cereal grains, but lack of moisture caused crop conditions to decline. Wheat producers sprayed isolated areas for Russian wheat aphids. Christmas tree growers were concerned about heat scorch and aphid infestation. The warm, dry weather benefited hay producers with nearly ideal hay harvesting conditions. Fruit and vegetable growers sprayed, irrigated, and harvested. Strawberry growers began harvest, while asparagus harvest ended mid-month.

**July:** Producers expressed concern over the continued lack of rain and potential for wild fires. Around the Palouse, winter wheat yields were reported average to above average, while spring wheat and barley yields were down significantly, with light test weights. Bluegrass harvest was almost finished at the end of the month in Spokane County. Pasture and range conditions continued to deteriorate, forcing livestock producers to feed hay due to the lack of available forage. Shellfish growers seeded hard shell clams in bags and moved oysters to fattening grounds. In the Yakima Valley, the hot weather caused minimal sunburn damage to apples and pears.

**August:** Due to extremely dry conditions most of the month, wildfire danger was very high. Winter wheat yields were about average, with exceptional grain quality. Carrots, sweet corn, mint spinach, and onion seed were harvested. Berry production was ahead of schedule this year. Raspberry harvest finished with yields below last year. Fruit harvest on early apple varieties and pears began. Livestock producers continued cultivating very dry, dusty fields in preparation for seeding. Clam seeding continued in Pacific County, while oyster transplanting finished.

**September:** Winter wheat and barley harvest ended in early September, while the spring wheat harvest ended the following week. The main field operations in the Palouse involved dusting in winter wheat seed and working stubble ground. In the Columbia Basin, warm temperatures slowed the harvest of potatoes and some fields were fumigated for next year's crop. In central Washington, a large number of fruits and vegetables were harvested. In the west, rain finally fell early in September, which helped bring the trend of record breaking temperatures to an end. However, later in the month warmer temperatures returned and provided good conditions for color development in pumpkins.

**October:** October began with dry, unseasonably warm weather. By mid-month, some precipitation was reported in eastern Washington, whereas flood conditions were prevalent west of the Cascades. As the month concluded, temperatures took a steep drop with a low of 10 degrees reported in Pullman. Winter wheat and corn conditions were mostly good to fair throughout the month. As October came to a close, potato and corn silage harvest was completed. Late season fruits and vegetables were harvested. In the west, apple harvest was stalled as wet conditions prevailed.

**November:** Record breaking cold temperatures and frost spread across the state in early November. Livestock owners fed supplemental hay to compensate for slow forage growth, cold temperatures, and snow covered pastures. Calves were moved to market at record high prices. Christmas tree harvest was well underway. Pruning of concord grapes and tree fruit began. Some winter wheat crops looked poor due to drought conditions, freezing temperatures, and high winds.

**December:** Christmas tree harvest was less than ideal due to the rainfall and cold temperatures. Raspberry growers pruned and trellised canes. Cover crops that were inter-seeded with corn were doing well in western Washington. Abundant hay supplies in most areas of the State caused hay prices to be soft. Gravity springs for livestock water saw reduced flow rates due to extended dry conditions in northeastern Washington. Dairy producers tried to keep pipes and milking equipment from freezing in western Washington. Many livestock producers expressed concern over the confirmation of an isolated case of BSE in Washington State.

## Weather Summary for Washington from January 1, 2003 to December 31, 2003

STATION	COUNTY	ELEV. FEET	AIR TEMPERATURE				PRECIPITATION			DAYS OF 32 COLD
			HI	LO	AVG	DFN	TOTAL	DFN	DAYS	
WEST										
Bellingham_Intl	Whatcom	157	88	18	51	2	32.09	-4.08	154	52
Everett	Snohomish	606	89	24	52	2	29.62	-6.89	152	26
Hoquiam	Grays Harbor	12	89	25	52	0	73.18	5.28	184	23
Kelso	Cowlitz	16	97	19	54	3	28.00	-18.54	121	32
Olympia	Thurston	200	96	17	51	2	52.52	1.93	172	61
Seattle-Tacoma	King	449	93	25	53	2	41.04	3.85	160	23
Shelton	Mason	279	97	19	52	0	74.35	9.48	176	61
Tacoma_WA_AP	King	321	95	19	52	1	37.21	-3.05	151	58
Vancouver	Clark	25	100	22	55	4	38.09	-3.21	158	33
CENTRAL										
Ellensburg	Kittitas	1,765	101	4	50	3	6.54	-2.40	80	135
Omak	Okanogan	1,298	104	1	51	6	10.16	-4.89	63	149
Stampede Pass	Kittitas	3,966	87	9	42	5	83.69	2.67	169	173
Wenatchee	Chelan	1,243	102	10	53	3	7.94	-0.37	74	111
Yakima AP	Yakima	1,056	104	3	52	3	6.28	-1.69	65	130
NORTHEAST										
Colville	Stevens	1,876	107	7	51	6	12.77	-8.45	79	120
Deer Park	Spokane	2,204	100	-7	47	2	19.81	1.28	114	150
Spokane AP	Spokane	2,365	100	-5	49	2	14.64	-1.85	116	136
EAST CENTRAL										
Ephrata	Grant	1,273	103	8	53	2	6.62	-0.61	64	122
Moses Lake	Grant	1,185	103	1	53	2	7.50	0.27	73	114
Quincy	Grant	3,883	100	6	53	4	5.81	-2.02	58	121
Ritzville	Adams	1,830	102	2	50	3	11.50	0.18	88	152
SOUTHEAST										
Hanford	Benton	731	108	7	55	-1	7.67	1.18	72	94
Pasco	Franklin	407	107	2	55	2	7.29	-0.20	77	84
Pullman	Whitman	2,552	98	3	49	3	14.11	-6.98	100	107
Walla Walla_Rgn	Walla Walla	1,204	104	10	55	2	18.90	-0.59	108	65
Whitman Mission	Walla Walla	632	106	3	53	3	16.40	2.65	123	95
IDAHO:										
WESTERN IDAHO PANHANDLE										
Coeur D’Alene	Kootenai	2,319	99	7	49	1	18.22	-7.73	111	122
Lewiston ID	Nez Perce	1,436	106	13	55	3	14.04	1.61	113	59

Summary based on NWS data.

DFN = Departure From Normal (Using 1961-90 Normals Period).

Precipitation (rain or melted snow/ice) in inches.

Precipitation Days = Days with precipitation of 0.01 inch or more.

Air Temperatures in Degrees Fahrenheit.

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